

Edith Cowan University
Research Online

Theses: Doctorates and Masters

Theses

1-1-1999

A consumption value approach to the factors that influence parental choice of secondary school: An exploratory study

Penelope J. Welsh
Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses>



Part of the [Marketing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Welsh, P. J. (1999). *A consumption value approach to the factors that influence parental choice of secondary school: An exploratory study*. <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1244>

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1244>

Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.
- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author's moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).
- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

**“A CONSUMPTION VALUE APPROACH TO THE FACTORS
THAT INFLUENCE PARENTAL CHOICE OF SECONDARY
SCHOOL: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY”**

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Business
(Marketing). Edith Cowan University.

By Penelope Jane Welsh
B. Bus (Curtin University of Technology)

Faculty of Business and Public Management
Edith Cowan University, Churchlands.

December 1999

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to identify the factors that influenced parents' choice of a secondary school for their children and, in particular, to determine, if any, the impact of a consumer behaviour construct (consumption value) on the school choice process.

Understanding how parents choose secondary schools and what parents value should help established and new private schools develop more effective marketing strategies, including their choices of target markets and location, as well as their educational emphasis, fee structure and disciplinary policies.

While a school's marketing efforts must include information about the school facilities and the implied social benefits of attending the particular school, this study found that Emotional Value, feeling good about the decision, was highly sought after by parents. Other factors such as school location, religious affiliation, financial considerations and leadership were all considered important, however, these were overshadowed by Emotional Value, highlighting the need to provide value to parents as well as children in the school's marketing efforts.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed,

Dated,

[Signature]
29th February 2000.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the help of my friends and I am indebted to them for their patience and generally putting up with me while I went on about my study.

There are a few people whom I would like to single out for thanks:

- Dayna and Simon, my children and teachers you are both very special people.
- Aunty Tricia, who passed on before she could celebrate the completion, in loving memory and always believing in me.
- Olive Schmidenberg - my mentor, motivator, shaker and shoulder – you've done a very good job!
- Geoff Soutar - for inspiration and marking the 1987 "protection" assignment without which none of this would ever have happened.
- Mark Johannesen – my very special friend and all time supporter.
- The parents, who participated in this study, gave of their time and shared their thoughts.
- Mike Smith and the staff of the college from which the sample was drawn.
- Kate Scantlebury - for starting me on the journey and for the encouragement.
- Bronwyn, Kaethi, Margaret and Colleen for their unending support and encouragement.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES	8
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	9
CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW	13
CHAPTER THREE: THE PRESENT STUDY	19
3.1 INTRODUCTION	19
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN	19
3.3 THE SAMPLE	19
3.3.1 Stage 1	20
3.3.2 Stage 2	20
3.3.3 Stage 3	21
3.4 DATA COLLECTION	22
3.4.1 Stage 1 and Stage 2	22
3.4.2 Stage 3	23
3.4.3 Stage 3 - The Questionnaire	23
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS	26
3.5.1 Stages 1 and 2 Analysis	26
3.5.2 Stage 3 Analysis	26
3.6 CONCLUSIONS	27
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE STAGES 1 AND 2	28
4.1 INTRODUCTION	28
4.2 THEMES IDENTIFIED IN STAGE 1	28
4.2.1 Theme 1 - Discipline	28
4.2.2 Theme 2 - Academic Considerations	29
4.2.3 Theme 3 - Leadership	29
4.2.4 Theme 4 - School's Newness	30
4.2.5 Theme 5 - Location and Accessibility	30
4.2.6 Theme 6 - Social Considerations	31
4.2.7 Theme 7 - Financial Considerations	31
4.2.8 Theme 8 - Religious Considerations	31
4.2.9 Theme 9 - School Size	32
4.2.10 Theme 10 - Individual Development	32
4.2.11 Stage 1 Conclusion	33
4.3 THEMES EMERGING FROM STAGE 2	34
4.3.1 Theme 1 - Discipline	34
4.3.2 Theme 2 - Academic Considerations	35
4.3.3 Theme 3 - Leadership	35
4.3.4 Theme 4 - Location and Accessibility	35
4.3.5 Theme 5 - Social Considerations	36
4.3.5.1 Negative reputation of other schools	36
4.3.5.2 Positive information and perceptions of the college	37
4.3.6 Theme 6 - Financial Considerations	38
4.3.7 Theme 7 - Religious Considerations	38
4.3.8 Theme 8 - School Size	39
4.3.9 Theme 9 - Individual Development	40
4.3.10 Stage 2 Conclusion	40
4.4 CONCLUSIONS	41
CHAPTER FIVE: STAGE 3 FINDINGS	42
5.1 INTRODUCTION	42
5.2 SAMPLE PROFILE	42
5.2.1 Location, Convenience and Geographic Dispersion	42
5.2.2 Position and Number of Children in the Family	42
5.2.3 Parents' Schooling Experience	43

5.2.4	<i>Employment and Income</i>	43
5.2.5	<i>Enrolled at Other Private Secondary Schools</i>	44
5.2.6	<i>Likelihood of Continuing Enrollment Process</i>	44
5.2.7	<i>Importance of Other Influences/Groups on Choice of the College</i>	45
5.2.8	<i>Spending on School Expenses</i>	46
5.3	DECISION CRITERIA	46
5.3.1	<i>Factor 1 - Private-Public Comparison</i>	50
5.3.2	<i>Factor 2 - Social Influences</i>	50
5.3.3	<i>Factor 3 - Changing Schools</i>	50
5.3.4	<i>Factor 4 - Religious Involvement</i>	50
5.3.5	<i>Factor 5 - Educational Effectiveness</i>	51
5.3.6	<i>Factor 6 - Financial Considerations</i>	51
5.3.7	<i>Factor 7 - Image</i>	51
5.4	CONSUMPTION VALUE ITEMS	52
5.5	REGRESSION ANALYSIS	53
5.6	CONCLUSIONS	56
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS		58
6.1	INTRODUCTION	58
6.2	A COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE ON SCHOOL CHOICE	58
6.2.1	<i>Location and Accessibility</i>	59
6.2.2	<i>Social Considerations</i>	59
6.2.3	<i>School's Newness</i>	60
6.2.4	<i>Religious Considerations</i>	60
6.3	THE RELEVANCE OF CONSUMPTION VALUE	60
6.4	LIMITATIONS OF SHETIL, NEWMAN AND GROSS'S MODEL	64
6.5	SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS ISSUES	65
6.6	IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MARKETING OF SCHOOLS	66
6.7	CONCLUSIONS	68
LIST OF REFERENCES		70
APPENDIX 1 - THE QUESTIONNAIRE		74

List of Tables

TABLE 3.1: CONSUMPTION VALUE ITEMS	25
TABLE 5.1: EMPLOYMENT OF RESPONDENTS	43
TABLE 5.2: LIKELIHOOD OF CONTINUING THE ENROLMENT PROCESS	44
TABLE 5.3: IMPORTANCE OF INFLUENCE GROUPS	45
TABLE 5.4: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS – 39 ITEMS DEVELOPED WITHIN THE STUDY	47
TABLE 5.5: FACTOR LOADINGS (HIGH LOADING ITEMS) - 34 ITEMS	49
TABLE 5.6: MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND RELIABILITIES OF THE SEVEN FACTORS AND REMAINING STATEMENTS	52
TABLE 5.7: CONSUMPTION VALUE DIMENSIONS	53
TABLE 5.8: REGRESSION ANALYSIS - BACKGROUND DATA	54
TABLE 5.9: REGRESSION ANALYSIS – DECISION DIMENSIONS	55
TABLE 5.10: REGRESSION ANALYSIS – COMBINED ANALYSIS	56

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (1995) described the school choice process as complex and emotive and one, in which the stakes are high. Indeed, to many families, such choices will be among their most important decisions and, if they choose to send children to a private school, may also be one of the most expensive choices they ever make. Consequently, school choice is likely to be a decision in which consumers are “highly involved” and one that leads to “extended decision making” (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1998, p. 499-501), suggesting that the decision can and probably should be examined from a consumer behaviour perspective.

Indeed, if a school's administration were aware of the factors that influence the school choice process, they would be able to develop appropriate marketing strategies, create schools that met the market's needs, inform their clients better and ensure appropriate school performance. Taking such an approach may affect decisions about a school's location, pricing and facilities, as well as the image that the school tries to portray in the market place. Despite the likelihood that a marketing approach may be useful, relatively few studies have taken such approach, as most such studies have been undertaken by educators and education administrators (Hamlin & Henry, 1996, p. 390). The present study is an attempt to fill a part of this gap by interviewing parents and using some consumer constructs to try to explain their school choice process.

The filling of this gap is likely to be important for, as the educational environment changes and the market plays a greater role, schools will need to take a market focus that is aimed at meeting the needs of their consumers (students, parents, communities and governments). Indeed, the OECD (1995, p. 12) would like to see a “relationship

between individuals as clients of an education system and schools as 'providers'," suggesting that school management would do well to examine the lessons learned by relationship marketers (Payne, 1995; Payne, Christopher, Peck & Clark, 1998).

In such an environment, school choice will be a crucial issue for families for "choosing of a school can have important implications for an individual child, and often (is) an emotional and self-defining moment for a parent" (OECD, 1995, p. 11). Further, the choices that families make will also have a significant impact on schools as they will determine schools' long-term viability and their ability to achieve whatever objectives they have set for themselves.

Traditionally, factors such as location, government regulation, academic and moral standards and the commitment of teaching staff have been viewed as the key school selection criteria and have been discussed extensively in the education literature (e.g. Harmer, 1994; Baker & Andrews, 1991). However, the value that parents place on these and other factors has tended to be ignored by educators, policy makers and planners (OECD, 1995). This is unfortunate, as value may be the crucial link in understanding such choices. Indeed, Holbrook (1996, p. 138) has argued that "value provides a foundation for all marketing activity", while Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991, p. 3) suggested that value "explain(s) and predict(s) market choices."

In Western Australia, parents can choose between private, full-fee paying schools (including home schooling) and public, government funded schools within restricted geographical boundaries. Parents who were interviewed in the present study feel the option of sending a child to a public school outside the designated area is discouraged at the present time, although this policy is under review within the State's Education Department. Some public schools offer specialist programs, such as art, music, sport

and aviation, and children who have particular skills and aptitudes and reside outside the geographic location may be offered a place in these specialist programs. Unless parents opt for private or home schooling they have little choice in the school that their children will attend.

The choice process is exacerbated as parents generally have little access to information about all relevant aspects of a school. This is particularly true as, in education, "neither the producer nor the consumer has much understanding about what is produced" and are often not able to specify an outcome (Garner & Hannaway, 1982, p. 123). As information is not readily available or identifiable, consumers do not necessarily act rationally (Palmer, 1994). The lack of information and the diversity of views that parents hold about education make it difficult for schools to develop marketing strategies that may improve parents' school choice processes. To overcome these difficulties, educational institutions need to know what parents value when choosing a school for their child and take this information into account when designing strategies and educational offerings.

Indeed, the variables that determine consumers' choices have been a major focus of research and a number of suggestions have been made. Price is seen as an important (Lichtenstein, Ridgway & Netemeyer, 1993), as is quality (Gale & Buzzell, 1989; Jacobson & Aaker, 1987; Steenkamp, 1990; Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988; Mangold & Babakus, 1990) and risk (Bauer, 1960; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Dowling, 1986). Because of the interrelationships between price, risk and quality, value has been suggested as a construct that draws these variables together (Sweeney, Soutar & Johnson, 1999). Since the three variables are likely to play a part in the school choice process, value may play a crucial role. The present study attempts to determine if this is

so by questioning a sample of parents who had made the decision or were in the process of making a choice about the secondary (high) school for one of their children.

The sample for the study was drawn from parents who had students enrolled on or had indicated an interest in sending their child to a particular secondary school (termed the college). Parents participating in the study were asked about the factors that had influenced their decision to enrol or consider enrolling their child at the college. In the first stage, the opinions of parents whose children were already attending the college were sought. In the second stage interviews were conducted with parents whose children were enrolled but were not yet attending the college as they were completing their final year of primary school. In the final stage of the study, parents whose children were registered but had not yet enrolled at the college as they would attend in 2000 or 2001 were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. From the data collected, it was hoped that an understanding would be obtained as to the role that value played in the choice process.

The next chapter outlines some of the previous research that has examined both the school choice process and consumption value, while the third chapter discusses the research approach taken in the present study. The fourth and fifth chapters report the findings obtained, while the final chapter discusses their implications for school managers.

CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Arguments about school choice continue around the world, as educational reform remains high on the political agenda (Harmer, 1994; Henig, 1994; Adler, 1992; Murray, 1993; Ball, 1996; Murray & Wallace, 1997). School choice, in this context, is seen as a parents' right to select the school that their children attend, allowing more freedom to parents, who may not otherwise have been able to choose a school to suit their children's needs (Fierman, 1989; McGroarty, 1994; Segal, 1992). The choice may even be that children attend no school but, rather, opt for home schooling (Chubbuck, 1993).

A number of authors have examined school choice (e.g. Lieberman, 1990; McGaw, Piper, Bank & Evans, 1993; Bannister, et al., 1990; Adler, 1992.) Their research suggests that the major reasons parents choose schools are:

- (1) Academic standards and academic success. The choice of subjects in the curriculum and programs offered, along with the academic rigour applied to schools have been seen as significant (Baker & Andrews, 1991; Convey 1986; Crawford and Freeman, 1996; Kamin & Erickson, 1981; Long & Toma, 1988; Meissner, Browne & Van Dunk, 1997; Hamlin & Henry, 1996; OECD, 1995). In Young's (1986) study, academic standards ranked fourth from a list of eighteen criteria.
- (2) Religious beliefs also seem to influence school choice (Convey, 1986; Crawford & Freeman, 1996; Kamin & Erickson, 1981; OECD, 1995). The OECD (1995, p. 28) summed up the role religion plays by noting that "schools with a religious identity are offering an alternative that may be chosen not just by the religiously-motivated, but by people who dislike the style of secular education, rather than secularism itself."

- (3) Discipline or, in some cases, a belief of a lack of discipline in public schools has prompted some parents to choose schools they believe exert such control (Crawford & Freeman, 1996; Kamin & Erickson, 1981; Meissner, Browne & Van Dunk, 1997; Young, 1986).
- (4) Income also has an impact as private schools are expensive and many families cannot afford to send children outside the public system (Convey, 1986; Long & Toma, 1988), although Long and Toma (1988) found the effect of income diminished over time.
- (5) Location and accessibility often determine which school children attend, with parents choosing a school close enough so their children could walk or use public transport easily (OECD, 1995). Kamin and Erickson (1981) found that school location and convenience affected families choosing public schools more than families choosing private schools. Young's (1986) study ranked location as ninth of the eighteen variables included in the study.
- (6) Student quality and social class also play a role (Hopkinson, 1991; Hamlin & Henry, 1996), as does student behaviour (Baker & Andrews, 1991).
- (7) The teaching staff and their commitment is also an important element (Meissner et al, 1997; Baker & Andrews, 1991; Young, 1986).
- (8) A school's academic and social reputation and facilities, parents' involvement and student safety all seem to play a role (Hamlin & Henry, 1996) but are seen as less important (Meissner et al, 1997).

As can be seen from the previous research, little work has been undertaken to understand how the factors investigated come together. The consumption value construct, recently developed in consumer behaviour, may help in this regard and was a central part of the present research project. Consequently, consumption value is discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

In researching the consumption value construct, it has been difficult to narrow its meaning to provide a plausible framework. Value has been linked to all stages of the consumption process and has been used to explain customer satisfaction and utility and is often associated with quality (Zeithaml, 1988; Sheth et al. 1991). In the present study a number of definitions of value were reviewed. The Collins dictionary (1989, p. 1437), for example, defines value as:

- 1) the desirability of a thing, often in respect of some property such as usefulness or exchangeability:
- 2) to assess or estimate the worth, merit or desirability of:
- 3) to have a high regard for especially in respect of worth, usefulness, merit:
- 4) satisfaction as in value for money to fix the financial or material worth of something.

The key words are *desirability* and *exchangeability*, requiring someone to *assess* the *worth, merit and/or usefulness* of a product or service.

Solomon (1996, p. 142) defined value as "a belief that some condition is preferable to its opposite" and consumers, when faced with choice, have to consider what is worthwhile and what merits their attention in the allocation of their "three precious resources: money, time and effort." (Sheth, et al. 1991, p. 4). These resources are exchanged for goods or services that are deemed valuable. The value in this exchange process is according to Zeithaml (1988, p. 13) "the overall consumer's

assessment of the utility of a product based on perception of what is received and what is given" in both monetary and non-monetary terms. Oliver (1996, p. 147) simplifies this by explaining value as a "judgement of receipts compared to sacrifices." Value in services is similar. For example, Zeithaml (1988, p. 13) highlighted that people value a service that is "highly personal and idiosyncratic." Indeed, Sweeney, Soutar, Whiteley and Johnson (1996, p. 1) argue that consumption value is situation specific and related to the usefulness of the service as perceived by the consumer, something with which the OECD (1995, p. 13) concurs.

Holbrook (1996, p. 138) defined "customer value as an interactive relativistic preference experience," as it requires an interaction between a consumer and a product or service in which a comparison is made that varies across individuals and is situation specific. Holbrook (1996, p. 138) suggested that preference develops when a judgement is made and that value resides in the consumption experience, rather than in the purchase itself. He developed a typology of customer value that can be used as a framework to explain different types of value that is based on "three key" value dimensions, namely:

- (1) An extrinsic versus intrinsic dimension (means end relationship)
- (2) A self- versus Other-Oriented dimension, and
- (3) An active versus reactive dimension.

For the student, education could be seen as both intrinsic and extrinsic - a means and an end. This reflects the personal nature of education such as ambition and future success in a career to the student. Students are required to attend school so education could be seen as being Other-Orientated, carried out in order to please parents and

others as well as fulfilling legislative obligations. While on the other hand education could be seen as self orientated as the student may be educating themselves for their own sake. Education is active in that to be educated a student must be a part of the education process although the schooling system may be reactive with the student feeling they are having something "done" to them.

Woodruff and Gardial (1995, p. 11) compared customer value and satisfaction, noting that customer value has a future orientation and is "what the customer desires from the product or service", so it "provides direction for the organization." Albrecht (1994, p. 14) asserted that customer value is a "new defining precept (and is the) "customer's perception of specific need fulfilment."

Naumann (1994, p. 5) viewed value as "a ratio of benefits to the financial sacrifice." He argued that the number of factors a customer uses to evaluate a purchase is often underestimated and that customers combine perceptions and expectations about financial outlays and link these to expected benefits. Financial sacrifices are made up of the "transaction price, life cycle costs and some degree of risk." This trade-off view is supported by Bolton and Drew (1991, p 377), who argue that there are "differences in customers' assessment of value due to differences in monetary costs, non-monetary costs, customers tastes and customer characteristics."

Sheth, et al.'s (1991) study was an attempt to increase our understanding of market choice behaviour. They identified five value dimensions that they believed impact on choice, namely:

- Functional value, which is the product or service's ability to perform some "functional, utilitarian or physical purpose."

- Social value, which is the ability of the product or service to “convey the social image they wish to project”
- Emotional value, which is a product or service’s ability to evoke positive or negative feelings.
- Epistemic value, which arises when there is “something new or different” about the service or product.
- Conditional value, which is “contingent on the situation or set of circumstances faced by the consumer.”

Although Sheth et al. (1991) suggested a variety of contexts in which consumption value would play an important role, their consumption value model does not appear to have been applied in a service context and, in particular, it has not been used in an education services context. Consequently, any research that brings value and education together is likely to provide new and useful insights. The next chapter outlines the research approach undertaken to provide these insights.

Value is different things to different consumers; it is both personal and situation specific. Oliver (1996, p 143) states “that consumers derive some sort of value from consumption”, however, “it is subject to numerous interpretations”. Consumers are able to see value both for themselves and for others. Value then is something that helps consumers determine what is worthwhile and is applied in both monetary and non-monetary terms.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, the purpose of the present study was to identify the factors that influenced parents' choice of a secondary school for their children and, in particular, to determine if consumption value plays an important role. From this information, it was possible to infer what the marketing implications for schools might be.

3.2. Research Design

The project was designed as an exploratory and investigative study. It was conducted in three stages, with data being collected over a 24-month period, commencing in 1996. Stages 1 and 2 used a qualitative approach to identify the factors parents considered to be important when choosing a secondary school for their child. A quantitative approach, based on the findings from the qualitative stages of the study, was used in stage 3. The methods used are described in detail in subsequent sections.

3.3 The Sample

The parents who participated in this study were drawn from families who had children attending the college or who were registered to enrol at the college. The college is located in Perth, Western Australia and was established as a co-educational secondary school in 1994 to provide education within a Christian context to its surrounding communities. On its establishment in 1994, the college had three classrooms, an office and an ablution block. Staff included the principal, one part time and two full time teachers and a full time clerical assistant. For the first eighteen

months of operation the college had no scheme electricity, but ran on generators, and it was not connected to the sewerage system. Staff were required to teach in areas outside their specialty subjects, however, they were chosen for their dedication and commitment to teaching and to the proposed college ethos. The college, at the beginning of the study, had an enrolment of 282 students in Years 8, 9 and 10, which are the first three years of high school in Western Australia. At the completion of the research project students were enrolled in all secondary classes (Years 8 through 12).

The sample for each stage of the study differed and is described below.

3.3.1 Stage 1

Stage 1 participants were drawn from parents whose children were already enrolled in the school in years 8, 9, and 10. A systematic sampling method (Zikmund, 1994, p. 372) was used to divide the college population into its three school years and participating families were selected from a complete list of students provided by the college. Three names were selected from each school year, giving a total of nine. Parents of one child elected not to participate in the study. A total of eight in depth interviews were conducted with the parents of remaining students. Technical difficulties prevented the transcription of one taped interview and this was discarded, which meant that three interviews were obtained from parents with children in years 9 and 10 and one interview from parents with a child in year 8.

3.3.2 Stage 2

In Stage Two, the sample was drawn from the college's register of families that wished to enrol their children in 1997 and 1999. There were 125 and 177 student names

respectively for these two years. Ten families (five from each year) were selected using every twenty-fifth name from the Register.

All selected parents for the 1997 school year participated in the study. However, only three from the 1999 school year participated. One parent from the 1999 sample declined to participate and another was not able to make two of the scheduled appointments within the research time frame. Two more families were contacted but neither family was able to participate in the given time frame. Where appropriate and possible both parents were asked to be present for the interview.

3.3.3 *Stage 3*

Parents selected for Stage 3 of the study were on the Register for their children to attend the college in 2000 and 2001 (i.e. the children were in years 6 and 5 of primary school respectively). The Register contained 340 names (Year 2000 =172 and Year 2001 =168). The register was checked, duplicate addresses were deleted, as were those whom the College indicated had advised they would like to withdraw from the enrolment process. With these revisions, which ensured only one survey was sent to any family regardless of year of enrolment, a total of 323 names remained on the register.

Questionnaires were mailed to all of the families in the revised Register. Three were returned "no longer at this address", making a total of 320. One hundred and eighty five useable returns were received within the specified three weeks, an overall response rate of 58%, which is excellent for mail surveys of this type.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collection methods used in each of the three stages are described in Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

3.4.1 *Stage 1 and Stage 2*

In line with the qualitative approach taken in the first two stages, the primary data collection method was an in-depth, semi-structured interview. Families were invited to participate in the study through a letter from the college principal. A few days later the families were contacted by telephone and a suitable appointment time was arranged, which was confirmed by letter.

Parents were advised the interview would take approximately one hour if both parents were present. Interviews lasted, on average, between 50-60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the participants' homes as it was felt that familiar surroundings would help recall and reduce any anxiety participants felt about a recorded interview (Whyte, 1960; McCracken, 1988). It was hoped that the greater feeling of comfort and control would encourage open communication and allow participants to use their own terminology when describing their experiences.

Open-ended questions were used to encourage, but not inhibit, respondent's answers. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and subsequently transcribed (McCracken, 1988, p. 41). A separate secretarial agency transcribed the majority of the tapes so familiarity with the data would not impede later analysis (McCracken, 1988, p. 41). The researcher checked both the tapes and the subsequent transcripts to ensure they were accurate accounts of the interviews.

3.4.2 Stage 3

The data collection method for Stage Three was a mailed questionnaire. Identical questionnaires were mailed to all parents of students registered to enrol at the college in 2000 and 2001. The only difference between the two sets of questionnaires was the year in which the child was registered to commence at the college. Along with the questionnaire, parents received a letter from the college principal asking them for their cooperation. It was pointed out that completion of the survey was voluntary and that anonymity would be maintained.

Parents were advised that the questionnaire would take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Every effort was made to make parents feel comfortable about completing the survey. The questionnaire also gave an assurance of confidentiality and explained that the survey was to be used for academic purposes. A reply paid envelope was included for parents' convenience. Parents were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it within three weeks, which was a date specified on the questionnaire.

3.4.3 Stage 3 - The Questionnaire

All the questions in the survey were closed and most had a Likert-type agree-disagree format. The questionnaire's sections are described in detail below.

Sections 1 to 3 asked about where the family lived by postcode, the number of children in the family and the age of the child referred to in the survey in relation to other siblings. Information about other siblings already attending secondary school was asked in Sections 4, 5 and 6.

Sections 7, 8 and 9 asked whether parents had attended a private school and whether this influenced their choice. Section 10 asked about perceptions of the college's location and accessibility, while sections 11 and 12 asked about occupation and family income. Sections 13 and 14 asked whether the child had been registered to enrol in any other private school.

Section 16 contained 60 statements and respondents were asked to rate each using a 7 point Likert Scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The statements in this section were developed from two sources. Twenty-one statements were derived from Sheth et al.'s (1991) and Sweeney, Soutar and Johnson's (1997) studies but modified to suit the educational service context. These items were related to three of Sheth et al.'s (1991) five consumption value dimensions (functional value, social value and emotional value.) The remaining two dimensions (epistemic value and conditional value) were not felt to be relevant to the context of the present study. The three consumption values dimensions used, together with the statements included in the questionnaire, are shown in Table 3.1.

The remaining 39 statements were developed from the qualitative interviews undertaken in the first two stages of the research project and asked about parents' general perceptions of secondary schools. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1.

TABLE 3.1: Consumption Value Items***FUNCTIONAL VALUE***

- The College will allow our child to do a range of things
- The College is a versatile institution
- The College is likely to give a good return for our money
- The College is a reasonably priced school
- The College offers real value for money
- The College is a good school for the price
- The College has consistent quality in its programs
- The College will be around a long time
- The College will provide a consistent education for our child
- The College will perform well for our child
- The College is a well run school

SOCIAL VALUE

- Our friends will approve if we send our child to the College
- The College will improve the way we are perceived by others
- The College fits in with our friends' ideas about a good school
- The College is appealing and attractive to most people
- The College will help us to feel acceptable

EMOTIONAL VALUE

- We feel relaxed about sending our child to the College
- We feel good about sending our child to the College
- We will enjoy being associated with the College
- We really want our child to go to the College
- It will give us pleasure to have a child at the College

In Section 17, respondents were asked about the likelihood that they would continue with the enrolment process at the college, using the Juster Scale (Juster, 1966) that asked respondents to estimate that probability on an eleven point scale ranging from almost no chance (1) to certain (11). Section 18 asked about the impact other influences, such as the media and family and friends, had on them when they were making their choice. Section 19 included a series of questions to find what parents would consider spending on their child's education on an annual basis.

3.5 Data Analysis

The methods used to analyse the data collected during the three stages of the research are discussed in the subsequent section.

3.5.1 *Stages 1 and 2 Analysis*

The transcribed tapes were content analysed manually and through the QRS NUD.IST (1995) program in order to construct categories of meanings and extract themes from the data collected (Fetterman, 1989). The results of this analysis are discussed in detail in chapter four. Questions that typified the categories and themes were also identified and, as already noted, 39 items developed in this way were incorporated in the questionnaire used in stage 3.

3.5.2 *Stage 3 Analysis*

A series of analyses were undertaken to understand the data obtained from the questionnaire, using the SPSS (1999) statistical analysis program. Initially, descriptive statistics (including means, medians, standard deviations and variances) were calculated to provide a profile of the sample and some understanding of their opinions about the issues raised.

Since one of the major purposes of the study was to examine the role that value plays in the school choice process, the three value dimensions were calculated as summated scales and their reliabilities were estimated using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The remaining 39 items in section 16 that were developed from the first two stages of the research were then factor analysed to determine if there were any underlying dimensions (Stewart, 1981). Since such dimensions were found, scales were

also calculated for these additional factors by summing those items that had high factor loadings. Coefficient alpha was also estimated for each of these factors.

In order to evaluate the relationship between parents' backgrounds and their perceptions of the value dimensions and the additional factors and the likelihood that they would enrol their child in the college, a series of regressions were estimated in which additional items were added. The regression results enabled an evaluation to be made of the significance and importance of the various aspects in explaining parents' willingness to enrol their child in the college.

3.6 Conclusions

The current chapter outlined the approach taken in the present study to understand the nature of the school choice process and, in particular, the three stages of the present research project, which included both qualitative and quantitative phases. The first two qualitative stages resulted in a great deal of "verbal" data that are presented and discussed in chapter 4. One of the outcomes of the first two stages was a questionnaire that was sent to all of the families with children on the college's register. The data obtained from this survey was analysed in a variety of ways and the results of this final quantitative stage are presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE STAGES 1 AND 2

4.1 Introduction

Results of the analysis of the personal interviews are reported in this chapter, which covers the two qualitative stages of this study. The format follows a uniform pattern of a statement of the theme or influencing factor, followed by a description of the theme and an illustrative quotation or quotations from the interview transcripts.

Passages quoted as illustrations of categories or themes are typical of interviewees' comments in that category. So as not to lose the personal nature of the participants' experience, verbatim quotations are used, which Fetterman (1989, p. 115) suggests allows the personal nature of the information to prevail so it is not "lost in third person description." To preserve confidentiality no names are mentioned. Ten themes emerged from Stage 1 of the study and nine from Stage 2 and these are presented below.

4.2 Themes Identified in Stage 1

Parents in Stage 1 of the study had children enrolled and studying at the college and are, in Sheth et al's. (1991) terms, already in the "consumption process." They identified the following themes:

4.2.1 Theme 1 - Discipline

All parents interviewed felt discipline was essential to the provision of a good education and believed the public school system could not, and did not, provide adequate discipline. The discipline policy at the college is clearly explained, along with the consequences, to parents and students on enrolment.

"I think their [college's] discipline system is good because basically it's very effective and I think that children need to learn discipline and I don't think that they're taught it enough in public schools."

"I just think they can control my child better in a private school because you've got a discipline of the Christian education"

Parents felt discipline provided their child with a secure and safe environment, free from unruly classroom and playground behaviour. Students were provided with a set of guidelines or rules that applied to everyone.

"It was important for him that there was discipline so that he felt secure and in a safe environment ... so that he doesn't have to be concerned about stuff going on that's not appropriate."

4.2.2 Theme 2 - Academic Considerations

Parents saw academic achievement as important. However, as the school was new it was difficult for parents to ascertain how the college will perform academically.

"I'm happy with, extremely happy with everything at the school, but my only reservation is academic standing and you don't know that. They haven't had a chance to put kids through TEE."

4.2.3 Theme 3 - Leadership

Although the school did not have an academic track record, the influence of the principal was a primary factor in attracting this group of parents to the college. Parents repeatedly indicated that the Principal's clear direction, leadership and management skills, along with his reputation as an educator, were influential and considered the 'backbone' of a good school. For most parents in this study the Principal appeared to be a determining factor in their choice of school.

"I just think meeting Mike [the Principal] and speaking with him and listening to his philosophy it was spot on with what I believe a school should provide. I think as soon as I met him, I just knew that that was the place where I wanted [my child] to be."

"If I'd had a different impression of the headmaster, I don't know whether things [enrolment] would have happened."

4.2.4 *Theme 4 - School's Newness*

Many parents were not able to clearly articulate what about the college's newness attracted them. Many thought the college would try harder to make an impression in all areas, including academic performance.

"With a new school, even though you are going into an unknown, I still think because they are new they're going to probably try that little bit harder."

One parent defined the appeal in terms of their child "grow[ing] with the school" and that "parents are more able.... to help mould the type of education the children get there"

4.2.5 *Theme 5 - Location and Accessibility*

The proximity of the school to the family home, or ease of access, was valued by parents who were interviewed.

"Also proximity to the school. It's nice and close to where we live and access is reasonably easy."

4.2.6 Theme 6 - Social Considerations

Most parents believed that they were likely to get a better 'class' of students in a private school and, that a private school education gives children an 'edge' as it is perceived to be better than a public school education.

"It may sound snobbish, but I think people who are prepared to spend the money and send their children to a private school are the sort of people who more push their children forwards and try and get the best abilities from them."

Three parents stated they did not wish to send their children to their local public school so their choice was limited to private schools.

4.2.7 Theme 7 - Financial Considerations

Financial considerations and the fees charged for education were a priority for some of the interviewed parents. The amount each family could budget for their child's education determined whether they could afford to send their child to a private school. Parents believed the fees at the college, along with the available methods of payment, made the college affordable. They considered it was value for money and within their financial budgets.

"I think that the value of the college is excellent because it's not as expensive as some of these other schools that are supposed to be really good."

4.2.8 Theme 8 - Religious Considerations

Many parents said they were "not particularly looking for a Christian School" although they "don't mind a bit of religion" and "the amount [of religion] they get down there won't hurt them".

One parent had chosen the college because it had a religious affiliation and they felt "more comfortable and relaxed about what they are going to teach."

4.2.9 Theme 9 - School Size

The parents interviewed considered the current and future size of the college as very important. The college planned for a maximum enrolment of 640 students, which it expected to reach by 1999. Limiting the number of students reassured parents that their child would not be lost in the system. The main advantage for interviewees was the individual attention they believed their child would receive in a small school would "see a student as an individual and not just a number".

"I've seen too many kids lost in the school system. Lost in the sense that nobody is aware of what's going on."

4.2.10 Theme 10 - Individual Development

Many parents stressed that it was important for their child to develop as an individual, whether it was their social skills, feelings of self worth, and/or their academic improvements. All parents commented on some aspect of their child's individual development since attending the college and that the school fostered individual growth.

"Well I used to think that education was going to school and gaining a lot of academic knowledge.... But since [child's name] has been going to the college I've changed my mind about what education is.... to me the more important things that [the child's] learning are how to socialise with other students and just how to feel accepted and encouraged and how to feel good about [him/her]self... because [the child's] a valuable person and I think that's what the college does."

4.2.11 Stage 1 Conclusion

In summary, parents interviewed during Stage 1 identified the following ten themes as being important influences the choice of secondary school, although the interviewing process did not allow these themes to be ordered in any way.

1. Discipline
2. Academic considerations
3. Leadership
4. School's newness
5. Location/accessibility
6. Social considerations
7. Financial considerations
8. Religious considerations
9. School size
10. Individual development

It can be seen that there is an interrelationship between some of the themes. For example Academic Considerations, Leadership, Newness of the School and School Size were related in that the School's Newness meant there was no academic track record but the Leadership and School Size became the major influencing factors in choosing the college.

4.3 Themes emerging from Stage 2

Stage 2 of the study was carried out later in 1996. Although some families had been interviewed by the college and accepted to commence in 1997, for the purpose of this study they were still pre-consumption customers.

As the college's reputation was more widely known in the community, parents in Stage 2 had more information about the college. The building program was considerably advanced; children had competed in Maths and Science competitions and fared well. The college was beginning to develop a history and some academic profile.

The major influences on these parents were similar to those of the parents in Stage 1. Although the School's Newness did not emerge as a factor in this stage the way it did in Stage 1, in all other respects the themes that emerged in Stage 2 were similar to Stage 1 and are outlined below.

4.3.1 Theme 1 - Discipline

Parents saw discipline as providing guidelines, rules and standards that are appropriate.

"It doesn't mean punishment - it's a path - a need to learn the limits"

"Discipline is having certain standards and being willing to stick by them. Rather have a school with more discipline than less discipline - but discipline with understanding and flexibility"

It was seen as important that the school policy was congruent with home and that school should be "an extension of home life" and "reinforces what we do at home".

4.3.2 Theme 2 - Academic Considerations

Academic success was not a priority with this group of parents, as they are generally "not overly fussed with academic results." One parent summed this up by saying they didn't know if

"The college is any better or any worse educationally - as it's new they might not have the variety of subjects or range of things that government schools have so this wasn't a priority"

At this stage, parents still did not have traditional academic achievement measures to assess the school's academic success. Comments such as there were "no academic milestones to gauge their success" and aspects such as the range of subjects and curriculum choices "didn't come into it" were common, although one parent had "heard the academic standards were good."

4.3.3 Theme 3 - Leadership

Most parents in this stage of the study had already met the Principal and the Parents of the Year 7 students had attended their enrolment interviews. Parents who had met the Principal were "Impressed with the principal - I liked what he had to say" and his enthusiasm for the school. They also liked the fact that the "Child was involved in the interview" and the Principal's "expectation of staff explained i.e. to know every child" and that he "has a clear picture of what he wants" and "plans for the future".

4.3.4 Theme 4 - Location and Accessibility

The college had negotiated improved bus services along major routes and the majority of parents in Stage 2 had reasonable access to the college, although one parent said

"Location's not perfect but we are able to drive them to school because I work just near the school"

Where access to other private or specialist public schools was thought to be too difficult, parents opted for more convenient options for their secondary school choice, of which the college was in their evoked set.

"Logistics of getting child to other Private college [north of river] was not on. Concerns about transport and time of departure and arrival home at night."

"Had opportunity for scholarship at high school in distant location and it was too far away and not in the direction that I worked"

4.3.5 Theme 5 - Social Considerations

For parents participating in Stage 2, the reputation of the school was important. While the college was still new for parents in this stage it had been established for three years and had developed a reputation for discipline and caring for its students. Parents had "sought out other's opinions" before making their decisions.

Parents viewed reputation in two ways - the positive information they had heard about the college and their negative perception of public schools. These perceptions were linked to the types of students who attend the school and their perceived social class: parents wanted "no undesirable elements around my child".

4.3.5.1 Negative reputation of other schools

One parent said before the college came along

"[We] would have considered crossing boundaries to other high schools with higher academic record rather than the local high school because of its reputation."

Participants' perceptions of the local high schools were not good. "When kids have to go to school somewhere ...the lowest place to go is a government school" and the "Local high school hasn't got the highest reputation around here". "Horror stories about the local high school", usually relating to lack of discipline and problems with drugs and the "way the kids looked and dressed" helped to reinforce this perception.

Some of the parents, whose children were in Year 7, had attended interviews at their local secondary school and made comments such as "it was grotty", "the teacher looked appalling" and the school did not have a "nice feel to it". Some parents with older children of secondary school age had "experienced the government system and it was not good" and there was "No way they were going to the local high school".

4.3.5.2 Positive information and perceptions of the college

Parents sought out information and a common source was other parents and the college's Open Day. The Open Day provided an opportunity for parents to see the college and talk with the Principal, Teachers, current students and parents. Comments from parents who had attended an Open Day were that the children they spoke to "liked the school", "liked their friends" and "liked being there".

The influence of peers and talk amongst parents was also influential. There is a "Nice group of friends going from local primary school" and talking with other parents at their local primary school who had heard "nice things and nice comments" about the college.

Parents wanted their children to "associate with people from backgrounds with more goals and families who have more planned goals".

4.3.6 Theme 6 - Financial Considerations

The college's fees were considered to be "Something between high-end private school and government school". Parents felt the college was reasonable and affordable

"Not everyone has money coming out of their ears – it's not as high as other private schools" and "had it not been there the child would have gone to the local government school."

Price was a consideration for many families, especially for those who would have more than one child attending secondary school simultaneously and a price commitment of up to five years per child. These parents felt they had to make some sacrifices in their budgets so their children could attend private school.

"Education is one thing but then family life and the quality of your life is also just as important. We didn't want to be working just to pay for the kids education."

"Education is not the only call on the money."

Parents in this study had investigated other private schools, however, the "Others are out of our price range" and "Finances precluded any other more expensive private schools".

4.3.7 Theme 7 - Religious Considerations

Parents felt they wanted a school that promoted Christian values and "religious affiliations didn't make a difference". However, one family in this study chose the college because of its religious affiliation. For another parent it was so there would be "No social stigma being involved with the church, as there would be in the local high school".

For the majority of parents it was important for the school to have a "Christian emphasis" and "Christian ways and values" and for one parent it was "More the feel that it's a Christian school than its academic record".

4.3.8 Theme 8 - School Size

School Size was linked to the perception that children would "get lost in the system" or "headcount" in large government schools. It was thought in a large school staff might be impersonal "lacking in the personal touch" and not knowing what is happening in the school

Teachers have greater knowledge of what is happening with the children than in a "bigger school" with "Nineteen hundred students at local high school - staff lose the personal touch"

"Teachers and principal have more of an idea about what's going on in a smaller school"

Parents believed a small school was more caring and their children would receive "Good pastoral care" and be "nurtured" and that "the attention would be on the child more" and the child would have the chance to be known for themselves. This links in with the importance parents placed on their child's individual development.

"The hope with a smaller school is that if child has some sort of problem they would have the time or take the special time to sort of coach her"

4.3.9 Theme 9 - Individual Development

Individual development was linked to staff commitment and school size, where parents said teachers “Encouraged [the child] to reach their full potential” and “take an interest in the individual.”

Past experience within the primary school system had led one parent to believe “that the middle of the road children are ignored” and parents wanted a school where their child received “Good pastoral care” and “A place where my child would be nurtured”. Children “Need to feel comfortable at the school.”

Parents considered there were “Other things besides education” like the child’s “social and emotional” wellbeing and it was important to “Get people skills rather than academic skills”.

4.3.10 Stage 2 Conclusion

In summary, parents interviewed during Stage 2 identified nine themes as being important influences in their choice of secondary school. The nine themes were similar to those identified in Stage 1; the only difference being that the School’s Newness was not a direct influence, although it was referred to in comments included under academic considerations.

In this stage, there was somewhat less emphasis on leadership as an important choice criterion. Stage 2 interviewees had found an opportunity to visit the college on Open Days and speak with parents whose children were already attending the college. This provided them with opinions other than those of the Principal.

4.4 Conclusions

Similar themes emerged with consumers in both the consumption and pre consumption stages and comments by both groups of parents were analogous. One theme that differed between the two stages was the school's newness, while parents identified it in Stage 1 it was not an issue for parents in Stage 2. Social considerations appeared to be more of an issue in Stage 2 and emphasis was placed on school reputation as much as the type of students who may be attending. The comments made by parents on Discipline, Academic Considerations and Leadership in both stages appear to be interconnected. Discipline was thought by some parents to be the basis of a good learning environment and it took a good leader to implement and maintain a strong discipline policy. The themes that emerged from Stages 1 and 2 were the basis of the questionnaire that will be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: STAGE 3 FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The results of the analysis of responses to the questionnaire sent to all parents on the college's register for the years 2000 and 2001, which was the quantitative stage of the present study, are reported in this chapter. As was noted in chapter 3, a variety of statistical procedures were used to examine the data that was collected and the results of these procedures are discussed in the sections that follow, starting with an examination of the sample's profile.

5.2 Sample Profile

5.2.1 *Location, Convenience and Geographic Disperston*

Parents were asked about their residential location. Sixty six percent of respondents lived within five kilometres of the school. While convenience has been suggested as important to school choice (OECD, 1995), 32% of the respondents in the present survey said they would find it quite or very difficult to travel between home and the college, suggesting that other school factors can overcome location difficulties.

5.2.2 *Position and Number of Children in the Family*

Respondents were also asked about the number of children in the family, the position of the child potentially being enrolled at the college relative to other siblings and whether or not their other children attended secondary school. Ninety six percent of respondents had two or more children, with 64% of the children registered at the college being the second or a subsequent child. Forty nine percent had children attending

secondary school, of which 34% attended the college. There was no discernable pattern of attendance at other secondary schools.

5.2.3 *Parents' Schooling Experience*

Questions were also asked about parents' school experiences and its influence on their choice of secondary school. Thirty seven percent of respondents had attended a private school and half of these felt that their own school experience had influenced their decision to send their child to a private school.

5.2.4 *Employment and Income*

Employment and income questions were also asked. The majority of families had two incomes and respondents were employed in a wide range of occupations, as can be seen in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1: Employment of Respondents

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>
▪ Domestic duties	22	40	▪ Professional/Senior Manager	24	44
▪ Professional/Sen. Manager	18	34	▪ Self Employed	22	41
▪ Self Employed	18	33	▪ Craft/Tradesperson	15	28
▪ Education/Medical Services	17	31	▪ Education/Medical Services	9	17
▪ Office/Clerical	15	27	▪ Office/Clerical	8	15
▪ Craft/Tradesperson	4	8	▪ Domestic duties	6	11
▪ Student	3	5	▪ Manual/Factory Worker	2	4
▪ Shop Worker	2	4	▪ Student	2	3
▪ Service (army/police etc)	2	3	▪ Service (army/police etc)	1	2
▪ Manual/Factory Worker		0	▪ Shop Worker	0.5	1
▪ Retired		0	▪ Retired	0.5	1

From the 1996 Census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997) it was ascertained that a weekly income of between \$700.00 and \$999.00 would be a

likely amount for the respondents to use as an income benchmark. On this basis, 15% had below average incomes and 77% of the respondents had average or above average incomes, which is not surprising given the potential costs of sending children to a private school.

5.2.5 *Enrolled at Other Private Secondary Schools*

Parents were also asked whether the child potentially attending the college was registered at other private schools and if so, which ones. Twenty nine percent of the respondents had registered their child at other private schools, with most registered at schools in the same area.

5.2.6 *Likelihood of Continuing Enrolment Process*

Respondents were asked how likely they were to continue the enrolment process at the college using the Juster (1966, 1969) scale. As can be seen in Table 5.2, most (68%) were certain or almost sure that they would complete the enrolment process at the college, while very few (less than ten percent) had a less than 50% chance of enrolling their child if they were given the opportunity.

TABLE 5.2: Likelihood of Continuing the Enrolment Process

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Likelihood</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Cum %</i>
11	Certain	88	47.5	47.5
10	Almost sure (90% likely)	38	20.5	68.0
9	Very probable (80% likely)	19	10.3	78.3
8	Probable (70% likely)	9	4.8	83.1
7	Good possibility (60% likely)	6	3.2	86.3
6	Fairly good possibility (50% likely)	9	4.9	91.2
5	Fair possibility (40% likely)	2	1.1	92.3
4	Some possibility (30% likely)	4	2.2	94.5
3	Slight possibility (20% likely)	2	1.1	95.6
2	Very slight possibility (10% likely)	4	2.2	97.8
1	No change/almost no change (1% likely)	4	2.2	100.0
Total		185	100	

A maximum of 128 student places are available in each school year. The college includes approximately 175 student names on the enrolment register for the available Year 8 places. All parents registering are aware of their place on the enrolment register. Due to the demand for places, more names are accepted on the enrolment register but the likelihood of a successful enrolment at the college is negligible for people later on the register, which may explain the high probabilities obtained.

5.2.7 *Importance of Other Influences/Groups on Choice of the College*

Respondents were asked about how important particular people or groups were in their choice of the college, using a 7 point scale, ranging from "no influence" (1) to "a very important influence" (7). As can be seen from the mean scores shown in Table 5.3, the college's principal and teachers were very important influences, followed by the child and the parents of children attending the college. Other sources were much less influential.

TABLE 5.3: Importance of Influence Groups

<i>Influences</i>	<i>Mean</i>
▪ Teachers	6.25
▪ The School Principal	6.20
▪ Your Child	5.82
▪ Parents of college students	5.10
▪ Extended Family	3.90
▪ Advertising/Promotional Material	3.78
▪ Friends	3.66
▪ Media Reports [e.g. newspapers, radio]	3.38
▪ Neighbours	3.10

5.2.8 *Spending on School Expenses*

Parents were also asked how much they would consider spending on their child's education each year. Most (62%) were willing to spend over \$3,000 on school related expenses each year, including school fees, uniforms, books, extracurricular activities and transport. The college's fees are approximately \$3,000 a year so some of the respondents (36%) are willing to spend the minimum to send their child to the college, suggesting that the college's fees and charges may be at the boundary for a sizeable minority of its parents.

5.3 **Decision Criteria**

As was noted in chapter 3, the 60 items included in section 16 of the survey were drawn from the consumption value scale developed by Sweeney Soutar and Johnson (1997) (21 items) and from the previous two qualitative stages of the present study (39 items). The groups of items from each source are examined in turn, beginning with those developed within the present study. The means and standard deviations of the 39 items developed within the present study are shown in Table 5.4.

TABLE 5.4: Descriptive Statistics – 39 Items developed within the study

<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>
• There is a lack of discipline in most high schools	5.22	1.38
• Teachers are carefully selected at private colleges	5.39	1.19
• Religious education is important	4.69	1.67
• Discipline aids a child's learning	5.95	1.02
• A school's image is important	5.61	1.17
• Children get "lost in the system" in large schools	5.68	1.44
• Government schools do not have a nurturing environment	4.82	1.38
• Parents are more involved in a child's education at a private school	4.81	1.40
• We feel forced to send our child to a private school because of their advantages	4.52	1.67
• A school's reputation is important	5.74	1.14
• The government system provides a good all round education	3.87	1.37
• A school's location is important	5.04	1.44
• Our background has influenced our decision to consider the college	4.34	1.79
• Paying fees involves parents in the school	4.14	1.51
• Children receive a better education at a private school	5.11	1.30
• I am familiar with the secondary education system	4.30	1.35
• A school's academic success is important	5.41	1.11
• Private schools offer more opportunity for academic success	5.11	1.27
• Government Schools do not offer as much opportunity for personal development	4.65	3.27
• A school's religious affiliation plays a big part in a child's education	4.11	1.58
• I feel reluctant about paying school fees	3.47	1.67
• Parents should be involved in their child's education	6.31	0.93
• Extra-curricular activities are important to a child's education	5.85	1.10
• Private schools offer more job opportunities	4.63	1.41
• Paying fees for five years will be a problem for us	3.77	1.78
• Only wealthy people send their children to private schools	2.86	1.58
• A private school education is a waste of money	2.30	1.61
• High achieving parents send their children to private colleges	4.01	1.85
• Attending a private school enhances a child's future	4.88	1.36
• Professional people send their children to private schools	4.28	1.72
• This college appeals to our friends	3.56	1.59
• We would feel guilty if we couldn't offer our child the best education available	4.58	1.91
• Children influence their parents' choice of secondary school	4.04	1.69
• If we came into a large amount of money this would influence our choice of school	4.01	2.13
• If our income was substantially reduced we would change our choice of school	3.94	1.79
• If we shifted to another area this would change our choice of school	4.04	1.76
• If our child didn't like the school they were attending, we would change schools	4.40	1.60
• We would consider changing schools if our child was not achieving expectations	4.63	1.63

However, as it was likely there were relationships between the 39 items, a principal components analysis was undertaken to determine the nature of the underlying dimensions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.66, suggesting that a factor analysis would be useful. A scree diagram (Cattell, 1966) suggested that seven factors could be usefully retained. However, five items (school location, familiarity with the secondary education system, opportunities in government schools for personal development, the "snob" value of private schools and the impact of income reduction on school choice) had low communalities (less than 0.30) and were removed from the analysis. The seven factors explained 54% of the total variance in the remaining 34 items. The factor loadings of the 34 items after a varimax rotation was undertaken to obtain simple structure are shown in Table 5.5. Factor names, developed from a consideration of the high loading items, are also shown and a brief description of each factor follows the Table.

TABLE 5.5: Factor Loadings (high loading items) - 34 Items

Factor 1 Private-public Comparison		Factor Loadings
▪ V34	Children receive a better education at a private school	.70
▪ V26	Government schools do not have a nurturing environment	.69
▪ V37	Private school offer more opportunity for academic success	.69
▪ V20	There is a lack of discipline in most high schools	.61
▪ V28	We feel forced to send our child to a private school because of their advantages	.60
▪ V27	Parent are more involved in a child's education at a private school	.58
▪ V66	Attending a private school enhances a child's future	.57
▪ V30	The government system provides a good all round education	.56
▪ V52	Private Schools offer more job opportunities when education is completed	.55
▪ V25	children get "lost in the system" in large schools	.51
Factor 2 Social Influences		
▪ V67	Professional people send their children to private schools	.70
▪ V65	High achieving parents send their children to private colleges	.69
▪ V68	The college appeals to our friends	.66
▪ V75	If we came into a large amount of money this would influence our choice of school	.52
▪ V73	We would feel guilty if we couldn't offer our child the best education available	.45
Factor 3 Changing Schools		
▪ V78	If our child didn't like the school they were attending we would change schools	.78
▪ V79	We would consider changing schools if our child was not achieving expectations	.75
▪ V74	Children influence their parents' choice of secondary school	.63
▪ V77	If we shifted to another area this would change our choice of school	.62
Factor 4 Religious Involvement		
▪ V39	A school's religious affiliation plays a big part in a child's education	.87
▪ V22	Religious education is important	.85
▪ V32	Our background has influenced our decision to consider the college	.55
▪ V33	Paying fees involved parents in school	.45
Factor 5 Educational Effectiveness		
▪ V50	Parents should be involved in their children's' education	.72
▪ V36	A school's academic success is important	.63
▪ V51	Extra curricular activities are important to a child's education	.62
▪ V23	Discipline aids a child's learning	.47
Factor 6 Financial Considerations		
▪ V49	I feel reluctant about paying schools fees	.72
▪ V59	Paying fees for five years will be a problem for us	.72
▪ V61	A private school education is a waste of money	.57
▪ V60	Only wealthy people send their children to private schools	.55
Factor 7 Image		
▪ V24	A school's image is important	.62
▪ V29	A school's reputation is important	.53
▪ V21	Teachers are carefully selected at private colleges	.45

5.3.1 *Factor 1 - Private-Public Comparison*

The items that loaded highly onto factor one were those that compared private and public schools (e.g. "Children receive a better education at a private school"). Such questions were concerned about education quality and opportunities for academic success, as well as about the impact of a school on the child's future. Consequently, the factor was termed "private-public comparison."

5.3.2 *Factor 2 - Social Influences*

The variables that related to factor two were concerned with the appeal the college had with parents' friends and perceptions about the types of people who send their children to private schools. It was termed a "social influences" factor.

5.3.3 *Factor 3 - Changing Schools*

Factor three was more difficult to name as it related to shifting to another area, the child's preferences and whether the child was achieving to their expectations. It seems that the factor could be termed a "changing schools" factor.

5.3.4 *Factor 4 - Religious Involvement*

The two highest loading items asked about the importance of the school's religious affiliation and of religious education. Parents' background, which could impact on their religious beliefs, also loaded onto this factor, as did items relating to the payment of school fees and parent involvement. However, as there was a considerable fall in the loadings after the first two items and a

subsequent reduction in reliability when all of the items were retained, the first two items were retained to calculate a “religious involvement” factor.

5.3.5 *Factor 5 – Educational Effectiveness*

The items that loaded onto factor five were those concerned with making education more effective (i.e. parent involvement, extra-curricular activities, discipline and a school’s success in the academic area). Consequently, the factor was termed “educational effectiveness.”

5.3.6 *Factor 6 – Financial Considerations*

Items that asked about parents’ commitment to paying school fees, and the financial difficulties parents might experience, loaded onto this factor. Consequently, factor six was termed a “financial commitment” factor.

5.3.7 *Factor 7 - Image*

The three variables that loaded onto factor seven were concerned about image and reputation. Consequently, the factor was termed an “image” factor:

The mean scores and standard deviations of the seven dimensions and the five items that were initially excluded are shown in Table 5.6. All of the alpha reliability coefficients were equal to or greater than 0.60, which makes the scales acceptable in an exploratory study such as the present investigation.

TABLE 5.6: Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities of the Seven Factors and Remaining Statements

<i>Dimension/Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Alpha Reliability</i>
▪ Private-public comparison	4.86	0.89	0.84
▪ Social influences	4.47	1.19	0.68
▪ Changing schools	4.21	1.15	0.76
▪ Religious involvement	4.40	1.52	0.76
▪ Educational effectiveness	5.88	0.70	0.60
▪ Financial considerations	3.10	1.14	0.66
▪ Image	5.58	0.90	0.66
▪ A school's location is important	5.04	1.44	na
▪ I am familiar with the secondary education system	4.30	1.35	na
▪ Government schools don't offer as much opportunity for personal development	4.65	3.27	na
▪ Private schools have "snob" value	4.02	1.56	na
▪ If our income was substantially reduced, we would change our choice of school	3.94	1.79	na

As can be seen from the table, educational effectiveness was seen as crucial, as was school image. Other factors were less crucial and respondents were least concerned about financial concerns and the impact of a reduced income on their school decision, suggesting that they had already taken the costs of a private school education into account in their budgeting.

5.4 Consumption Value Items

As mentioned earlier, 21 items were included in the survey that attempted to measure three of Sheth et al.'s (1991) consumption value dimensions. These items, developed by Sweeney et al. (1997), were designed as general value items but were

particularised in the present study to reflect the school choice situation being investigated. The mean scores, standard deviations and alpha coefficients for the functional, social and emotional value subscale are shown in Table 5.7.

TABLE 5.7: Consumption Value Dimensions

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Alpha Coefficient</i>
▪ Functional Value	5.42	0.88	.93
▪ Social Value	3.52	1.16	.76
▪ Emotional Value	5.64	1.07	.90

As can be seen from the Table, the Emotional and Functional dimensions had higher mean scores than did the social dimension and t-tests found that the three dimensions had significantly different means (at the 1% level). It would seem that the respondents in the present survey placed more value on the emotional and functional aspects of a school than they did on its social aspects.

5.5 Regression Analysis

A major purpose of the present study was to determine if there was a relationship between parents' intention to enrol their child in the college and the suggested decision dimensions (the three consumption value dimensions, the seven dimensions developed within the study and the five items that did not load onto any of the seven dimensions). Consequently, regression analysis was used to estimate the nature and strength of these relationships, as well as to examine the role that parents' backgrounds play on the decision to send a child to the college.

Initially, the background data collected (e.g. income, employment and family structure) were included as explanatory variables and regressed against responses to the Juster-likelihood scale. The ten dimensions and the non-loading items were then

included as independent variables in a separate regression. Finally, a combined regression was estimated in which the background data were included first to control for their impact on the decision process.

Using a stepwise regression procedure, it was found that the three background variables shown in Table 5.8 had a significant relationship with the likelihood of sending a child to the college. The F statistic of 12.11 was significant beyond the 1% level but the adjusted R^2 statistic was 0.17, suggesting that, while some background variables influence the enrolment decision, there are other more important factors.

As can be seen from the table, children who are already enrolled elsewhere or who have at least two older siblings are less likely to attend, while families who would not find it difficult to travel to the school are more likely to continue the enrolment process. Further, as can be seen from the standardised regression coefficients, enrolment at another school has considerably more impact than either of the other variables. It would seem that "multiple-register" families are still considering their final decision while those who have only registered at the college have already made up their mind, perhaps because there are no other private school options.

TABLE 5.8: Regression analysis - Background Data

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Regression Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Standardised Regression Coefficient</i>	<i>t-statistic</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
▪ Enrolled at another school	-1.84	0.38	-0.34	-4.81	0.00
▪ No difficulty in travelling to the college	0.78	0.37	0.15	2.09	0.04
▪ Third or later in birth order	-0.83	0.47	-0.12	-1.75	0.08
▪ Constant	9.46	0.35		27.25	0.00

When the decision dimensions were included as explanatory variables and regressed against responses to the Juster likelihood scale, it was found that the three background variables shown in Table 5.9 had a significant relationship with the likelihood of sending a child to the college. The F statistic of 29.95 was significant well beyond the 1% level and the adjusted R^2 statistic was 0.44, suggesting that the decision dimension plays a major role in the school decision process.

As can be seen from the Table, parents who believed that they would obtain emotional value from sending their child to the college and who believed that location was important were more likely to continue the enrolment process. Parents who were “concerned” about income falling or who thought image and educational effectiveness were important were less likely to continue the enrolment process. The final items may have a negative impact because of the college’s “newness.” As it develops a reputation (image) and can demonstrate that it is an educationally effective school, these factors’ impact may lessen.

TABLE 5.9: Regression analysis – Decision Dimensions

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Regression Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Standardised Regression Coefficient</i>	<i>t-statistic</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
▪ Emotional value	1.63	0.15	0.70	11.06	0.00
▪ If income fell, we would change choice	-0.21	0.08	-0.15	-2.69	0.01
▪ Image	-0.34	0.18	-0.12	-1.91	0.06
▪ School location is important	0.23	0.10	0.13	2.37	0.02
▪ Educational effectiveness	-0.46	0.22	-0.13	-2.11	0.04
▪ <i>Constant</i>	4.43	1.35		3.29	0.00

Finally, the background data and the decision dimensions were combined into a single regression, in which the background variables were introduced first to control for

their impact. The results obtained are shown in Table 5.10. The regression had an F statistic of 30.10, which is significant well beyond the 1% level and an adjusted R^2 of 0.49, suggesting that the combined data set explained about half of the variance in the Juster scale responses, which is extremely good in a cross sectional analysis of this type. Further, the combined analysis confirmed the earlier findings and suggested that the college presently relied on creating emotional value as this factor had the greatest impact on parents' decision process. Further, the combined result suggested that educational effectiveness, rather than image, was the key to persuading parents who were concerned about sending their children to a new school.

TABLE 5.10: Regression analysis – Combined Analysis

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Regression Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Standardised Regression Coefficient</i>	<i>t-statistic</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
▪ Enrolled at another school	-0.96	0.31	-0.18	-3.12	0.00
▪ No difficulty in travelling to the college	0.86	0.29	0.16	2.94	0.00
▪ Third or later in birth order	-0.70	0.36	-0.10	-1.96	0.05
▪ Emotional value	1.40	0.14	0.60	10.24	0.00
▪ Educational effectiveness	0.56	0.20	-0.16	-2.78	0.01
▪ School location is important	-0.18	0.08	-0.13	-2.32	0.02
▪ <i>Constant</i>	5.25	1.27		4.15	0.00

5.6 Conclusions

Those parents who have their children registered at other private schools appear to be keeping their options open, which may be influenced by their place on the college's register. Given parents are aware of their child's place on the register this may have influenced their responses to the question on the likelihood of continuing the enrolment process and may, in turn, have influenced other responses.

There are multiple influences that affect a parent's decision about the choice of secondary school for their child and, for this study in particular, the likelihood that they will continue with the enrolment process. School location, the child's position on the register, their enrolment at other schools and the order of their birth within the family are likely to have influenced parents' decisions. However, the most important influence on the parents in this study was the emotional value the college offered them. Being a new school, the college had no established image and no academic record on which potential customers could base its educational effectiveness and parents who considered this to be important were less likely to continue the enrolment process

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The present study investigated some of the factors that influence parents when they are choosing a secondary school for their children. The study had three stages, the first two being qualitative and the third quantitative. Results from all three stages were discussed in the previous chapters, culminating in the regression analyses that were undertaken to see whether parents' school choice could be predicted. As was seen in the last chapter, the suggested model was a good predictor of the choice process. A number of issues and conclusions emerged from the study and they are discussed in the present chapter.

6.2 A Comparison to the Literature on School Choice

The major themes that emerged from the qualitative research carried out in Stages 1 and 2 of the present study supported previous research into school choice (e.g. Hamlin & Henry, 1996; Young, 1986; Kamin & Erickson, 1981; Crawford & Freeman, 1996; OECD, 1995; Long & Toma, 1988). However, three additional themes emerged from the present interviews (leadership, school size and personal development) that do not appear to have been discussed previously, although the importance of leadership has long been recognised through the principal's role of giving "the school unity" (Rolland (1936) cited in McKeown & Hone, 1976, p. 3). The major themes that emerged were:

- Leadership was seen as important because it defined the school's ethos and, for the parents surveyed, it seem to be related to the influence and vision the principal brought to the college.
- School size was seen as important, as many parents did not want to send their child to a large school in which they felt their child would be lost and in which they would have less chance of achieving their potential.

- Individual development was seen as important because parents wanted their child to be recognised as an individual, with individual needs that would the school would take into account while the child was enrolled.

6.2.1 *Location and Accessibility*

Previous research had highlighted the importance of a school's location and accessibility (OECD, 1995; Young, 1986). Although some of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 parents felt location and accessibility were relevant, an examination of the areas from which the college's students were drawn found many families resided more than 10 kilometres from the college and there were no direct public transport links that made access to the college easy.

It seems that location and difficulty of access are important and do reduce the likelihood of a child attending a school. However, they may be overcome by other factors (Kamin & Erickson, 1981). This interpretation was confirmed in the Stage 3 subsequent regression analysis as school location was found to be a significant predictor of parents continuing the enrolment process at the college, but its impact was smaller than a number of other factors.

6.2.2 *Social Considerations*

Hopkinson (1991) found that the quality of students and the social class from which they were drawn were two potentially important choice criteria for parents and this was also found in the present study.

6.2.3 *School's Newness*

While research undertaken by the OECD (1995, p. 29) suggested that parents were unwilling to 'experiment' with their child's education (especially when deciding about secondary education), comments by parents in Stage 1 of the present study suggested that parents, although wary and concerned, were willing to send their child to a new school that did not have an established reputation. Stage 3 results, however, highlighted that, for some parents, the image and reputation of a school are important and, if this was so, such parents were less likely than other parents to continue their enrolment process with the college, which was a very new school that had yet to develop a strong image or reputation.

6.2.4 *Religious Considerations*

The OECD (1995, p. 28) reported that "schools with a religious identity are offering an alternative that may be chosen not just by the religiously-motivated" and this statement summed up the feelings of many of the parents interviewed in the present study.

6.3 **The Relevance of Consumption Value**

As was noted in previous chapters, the present study also examined the impact of a consumer behaviour construct (consumption value) on the school choice process. Sheth et al. (1991, p. 10) suggested that consumption value provides a useful framework from which to examine such choices, noting that "social, physical, and economic situations may all influence choice, creating temporary or conditional social and functional value." When attempting to place the criteria raised by parents into a value framework, it was sometimes difficult to determine which of Sheth et al.'s (1991) five

value dimensions related best to participants' responses. For example, accessibility could create conditional or functional value. The limitations of Sheth et al.'s (1991) suggestions in a study such as the present one are discussed later in this chapter.

Parents in Stage 1, particularly those with Year 9 and 10 students attending the college, felt they "really only had the word of the Principal to go on" when they made their choice, as there was little information in the market place about the college because it had just opened. This "newness" attracted some parents and could have created epistemic value as the college had "the capacity to provide something new or different" (Sheth et al. 1991, p. 21). Epistemic value may only relate to participants in Stage 1 as, by Stage 3, the college had developed a name in the market place and respondents to the Stage 3 survey were well aware of the college's existence, culture and ethos.

Conditional value is "contingent on the situation or set of circumstances faced by the consumer" (Sheth et al. 1991, p. 10). Secondary school choice is a long-term decision as it is a five-year commitment for most parents. Conditional value may affect parents' choices, as suggested in some of the comments from parents interviewed in Stages 1 and 2:

- a change in financial circumstances, "if we won lotto then maybe I might think about other private schools",
- shifting to a suburb where access to the college became too difficult,
- a perception that their child was not performing in their present school environment, and
- a breach of the discipline policy by the child, resulting in expulsion from the school.

In the Stage 3 survey, no specific questions measured conditional value. However, Factor Three (Changing Schools) could be related to this dimension as it was concerned, at least in part, with the likelihood that parents would change schools if their situation changed.

Functional value arises when a product or service has a "functional, utilitarian or physical purpose" (Sheth et al. 1991, p. 8). School attributes such as physical facilities, curriculum choice, location and accessibility can create functional value.

Three types of functional value were included in the Stage 3 survey (versatility, price and performance). Versatility value is created if parents believe that the college is offers a range of features for children, such as extra curricular activities, and that it can take account of individual differences to ensure each child is offered an appropriate education.

Price value is created when parents' believe that they get a good return for the money they spend on sending their child to the college and that the college is a reasonably priced school that provides good value for money. Performance value is created through the consistency in the college's programs and education processes, being well run, being likely to be around for a long time and being able to perform to parents' educational expectations.

Social value arises when a product or service conveys "the social image (purchasers) wish to project" (Sheth et al. 1991, p. 8). Parents may feel that having a child attending a private fee paying school provides social value to their family and perceptions of a school's social status, perhaps through the fees charged, could influence their decision to send a child to that school. The types of students and their

parents and the location of the school may also have social value, as they are easily seen and identifiable by people not directly involved with the school.

In the college's foundation year (1994), parents electing to enrol their children did not appear to be influenced by social considerations, but this may explain why enrolments were low, as only 57 of the 128 available places were filled in that year. The following year saw an increase in student enrolments while, in 1996, parents had to place their children's names on a waiting list, as is currently the case. The only social value indicator for parents in 1994 was the school fee that the college charged, relative to other private schools, including well established "branded" colleges and some less expensive private schools in the immediate area. Such a price comparison would have suggested that the college had lower social status, as school fees were kept low as a matter of school policy.

Emotional value arises from a product or service's ability to evoke a customer's feelings. Sheth et al. (1991, p. 20) noted that feelings, such as comfort, security, anger, fear and guilt may be associated with a service. Parents interviewed in Stage 1 and 2 of the present study recalled memories of their own school experiences that had aroused feelings of anger or fear. Some memories were positive, however, as one parent noted:

"My own experience with private school was that it gave you a feeling of self confidence and self discipline."

In the case where the parent's secondary school experience was negative, the hope that the college would enable them to establish a relationship with the principal or with the college's teachers provided some comfort that their child's schooling would be less traumatic than their own experiences.

The college's religious affiliations also aroused emotions for some and one parent in Stage 2 stressed that this was essential to the choice. While the college has a religious affiliation it could be that some parents valued the college's Christian values, rather than it's affiliation with a particular Christian denomination.

School choice is very personal decision and the emphasis placed on the various criteria differed markedly among participants, which is line with Sheth et al.'s (1991) consumption value research and with the OECD's (1995) research into school choice.

6.4 Limitations of Sheth, Newman and Gross's Model

Although the consumption value model was designed to help organisations understand the choice criteria consumers used to make choices in their markets, the present study suggested that the five consumption value dimensions Sheth et al. (1991) developed may have limited applicability to the school choice process.

Sheth et al. (1991, p. 13) argued that their model was "applicable to choices that are made by an individual on a systematic and voluntary basis." An individual, however, does not usually make the choice about which school their child will attend. In most cases, the choice is a family decision, with children in many families having considerable influence in the process and the decision.

Further, it is debatable whether the school choice is made systematically. Systematic choice "requires a nominal degree of deliberation" and "is at least somewhat important; that the alternatives are differentiated; and that the consumer knows how to choose among alternatives, either as function of experience or of product knowledge" (Sheth et al. 1991, p. 14). The applicability of the model may be limited when considering school choice, as a number of the parents interviewed in Stages 1 and 2 felt

that they had only very limited experience or knowledge that would help them choose their child's secondary school, especially if the child was their first born.

Sheth et al. (1991, p. 14) noted that the "market structure generally limits the alternatives," which is the case with school choice as parents may be limited by location or finances. Sheth et al. (1991, p. 14) also argued that choices are sometimes "made by others rather than the user," which is the case for school choice as the child, not the parent, attends the school.

Sheth et al. (1991, p. 16) further argued that there were three levels of market choice behaviour, namely:

- The choice to buy or not to buy. Parents have no choice as they have to educate their children as they are forced by law to "buy" into the education system at least until the child is fifteen.
- The choice of product type. The choice most parents face is between a private and a public (government) school, although home schooling is an alternative for a small minority of the population.
- The choice of brand. If a parent chooses a government school there is little or no choice of "brand." There is a range of private schools but choice may be dependent on the availability of space and the attributes that parents value, as discussed earlier in this thesis.

6.5 Sample Characteristics Issues

The sample included parents at different stages of the consumption process, which may have influenced their responses. Stage 1 parents were currently consuming the college's services as their children were attending the school and their responses may reflect their experiences from their association with the college. Stage 2 parents, on the other hand, were in the pre-consumption stage, although they had been advised that their child had been accepted to attend the college. It should be noted that responses by parents in both the pre-consumption and the consumption stages were very similar.

suggesting that their college experiences may not have changed many of the Stage 1 parents' views.

Stage 3 parents were also in the pre-consumption stage as the child had a place on the register but they had not been informed of the outcome at the time the questionnaire was distributed. However, thirty four percent of the Stage 3 respondents already had a child attending the college and their experiences with their older children are likely to have influenced their responses to the survey.

The sample was parents who were seeking to send their children to a relatively new school and this may reduce the generalisability of the results. Additional research which includes both private and government schools may improve the results.

6.6 Implications for the Marketing of Schools

A common theme that emerged during the Stages 1 and 2 interviews was that parents felt they lacked "factual" information about the secondary schools that their child might attend. Parents felt they had to actively search for information if they were thinking about alternatives other than the local government high school for their children. Interestingly, most of the parents interviewed had heard about the college from other parents, suggesting the importance of positive word of mouth in professional service situations, such as the present one. As one parent noted:

"We talk when we are on canteen duty (at the local primary school) about where our children will go to high school."

After becoming aware of the existence of the college, many parents visited the college on one of its "Open Days." The Open Days offered parents and children an opportunity to talk to teachers and the principal, as well as with current students and

their parents. As noted in chapter five, the school principal and the teachers were important influences, so Open Day experiences are likely to have a vital influence on the decision process and need to be well coordinated and managed.

While, in the beginning, the "school's newness" may have attracted some parents, according to the Principal, many parents were concerned about the college's "newness" and were apprehensive because it had very few facilities, no history and no established academic reputation. This newness resulted in many parents in the very early days deciding not to take a chance on the college and, therefore, they did not enrol their child during its first two years of operation, suggesting that perceived risk may have been a major factor in the "new" situation.

Some parents were willing to take a chance on a new school, however, feeling that they might be given an opportunity to have greater input during the college's formative stages, which was evident from many of the comments made by parents interviewed in Stage 1. In the context of education, alternative teaching methods may have epistemic value. However, as the majority of parents seem to be "reluctant to subject their children to anything that may seem 'experimental'" (OECD, 1995, p. 29), this may not be an appropriate strategy for private schools. It was apparent that parents believed even though it was a new school, the college offered a very traditional high school education, with a very strict disciplinary code. In any further research, what is new and different in education needs to be defined and examined more closely than was possible in the present study of a single school.

As competition increases and more parents consider sending their children to private schools, adopting a marketing approach that differentiates a school in the market place will be essential, regardless of the balance between supply and demand. The

present study was designed to uncover the factors that parents thought were important when they were choosing a secondary school for their children. Understanding these factors should help established and new private schools develop more effective marketing strategies, including their choices of target markets and location, as well as their educational emphasis, fee structure and disciplinary policies. Even the choices of an appropriate name, and a well defined positioning statement, may be uncovered from the type of research that was undertaken in the present study.

However, in the present study, parents were not asked how important the various decision factors were or how they might trade off between these factors. That is, the study did not ask if parents were willing to give up emotional value for a price reduction or if educational effectiveness would be traded off for a more accessible location. Such information would be invaluable to schools attempting to develop long-term plans and further research of this nature is needed to add to the information obtained in the present study.

6.7 Conclusions

The results obtained in the present study suggested that private schools provide value to parents as much as they do to the children they educate. It is therefore important that schools take account of the factors parents' value when developing strategies for growth and development.

In an environment of change, in which the idea of school choice within the public sector is being debated, it will be imperative that private schools, particularly new private schools, understand the relationship between the school and its parents and students.

Academic and social outcomes are difficult to determine in the short run and may not be realised until long after the child has finished their schooling. As emotional value is short term and happens as the decision about a school is being made, it is not surprising that this value dimension played a major role in the choice process, as was seen in the final regression analysis. A parent needs to feel "good" about their decision, believing they are doing the "right thing" by their child in their choice of school, if they are to make the decision to send a child to a school, particularly if the school is a private institution that charges fees.

It is essential that the school's marketing efforts, while including functional aspects, such as physical facilities, and implying social value, such as the types of parents whose children attend the school, must also place significant emphasis on making parents feel good about their decision to send a child to the school as it is emotional value that is crucial to the choice.

With an adjusted R^2 of 0.49 in the final regression, which is high in a cross sectional sample such as the one analysed in the present study, it can be concluded that the results obtained are significant and can be used with confidence by the college as it prepares its marketing efforts. Other, more established, schools should, however, undertake similar research to determine if the results obtained are specific to the college or have greater generality.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Adler, M. (1992). *Parents and Schools. Customer, Managers or Partners?* Edited by P Munn. Routledge, London.
- Albrecht, K. (1994). Customer Value. *Executive Excellence*. Sept. 14-15.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997). *The 1996 Census of Population and Housing, Basic Community Profile* Catalogue No. 2020.0.
- Baker, R. & Andrews, J. (1991). Parental Reasons for Sending Children to a Rural Day and Boarding School. *Education in Rural Australia*, 1(1), 21-26.
- Ball, S.J. (1996). On the Cusp: Choosing between State and Private Schools in the UK: Action within an Economy of Symbolic Goods.
- Bannister, S., Hough, M., Fagan, G., McAndrew, L. & Matin, P. (1990). *Talking about School. Surveys of Parents' Views on School Education in Scotland*. Her Majesty's Printing Office, Edinburgh.
- Bauer, R.A. (1960). Consumer Behaviour as Risk Taking. In Hancock, R.S. (Ed) *Dynamic Marketing in a Changing World*. Chicago Illinois. American Marketing Association. 389-398.
- Berry, L., Parasuraman, A. & Zeithaml, V. (1988). The Service Quality Puzzle. *Business Horizons*, 31(5), 35-43.
- Bolton R.N. & Drew J.H. (1991, March). A multistage Model of Customers' Assessments of Service Quality and Value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 375-384.
- Cattell, R.B. (1966). *The Meaning and strategic use of factor analysis*. In R.B. Cattell (9ed.) *Handbook of Multivariate Experimental Psychology*. Chicago. Rand McNally
- Churbuck, D. (1993, October 11). The ultimate school choice: No school at all. *Forbes*, 152(8), 155-150.
- Collins Concise Dictionary Plus* (1989). Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd.
- Convey, J. J. (1986, April 16-20). *Parental Choice of Catholic Schools as a Function of Religion, Race and Family Income*. Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association.
- Crawford, J. & Freeman S. (1996). Why Parents Choose Private Schooling: Implications for Public School Programs and Information Campaigns. *Spectrum*, 14 (3), 9-16.
- Cronbach, L.J. (1951). Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests. *Psychometrika*, (6), 297-334.

- Dowling, G. R. (1986). Perceived Risk: The Concept and Its Measurement. *Psychology and Marketing*, (3), 193-210.
- Fierman, J. (1989, December). Giving Parents a Choice of Schools. *Fortune*, 120(14), 147-152.
- Fetterman, D.M. (1989). Ethnography - Step by Step. *Applied Social Science Research Methods Series*, 17. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Gale-Bradley-T; Buzzell-Robert-D. (1989) Market Perceived Quality: Key Strategic Concept. *Planning-Review*, 17(2), 6-15,48.
- Garner, W.T. & Hannaway, J. (1982). *School Choice in the Public Sector: A Case Study of Parental Decision Making in Family Choice in School*. Ed Manley-Casimir, M. E. Lexington: D. C. Heath & Co.
- Hamblin, R. & Henry, J. (1996). *The Consumer Choice Process In Relation to the Provision of Secondary School Education in a Free Market a Commercial Perspective in Southern Marketing: Theory and Application Vol. II*. University of South Australia, Marketing Science Centre, 389-398.
- Harmer, D. (1994). *School Choice. Why You Need It - How You Get It*. Cato Institute, Washington, DC.
- Hawkins, D., Best, R. & Coney, K. (1998). *Consumer Behaviour: Building Marketing Strategy*. Boston. Irwin/McGraw Hill.
- Henig, J.R. (1994). *Rethinking School Choice. Limits of the Market Metaphor*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Holbrook, M.B. (1996). Customer Value - A Framework For Analysis and Research *Advances in Consumer Research*, 23, 138-142.
- Hopkinson, G. (1991). Marketing the Public School System. *The Examiner*, September 5th, 16-17.
- Jacobson, R. & Aaker, D.A. (1987, October). The Strategic Role of Product Quality. *Journal-of-Marketing*, 51(4), 31-44.
- Juster, F. T. (1966, September). Consumer Buying Intentions and Purchase probability: An experiment in survey Design. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*. 658-696.
- Juster, F.T. (1969). *Consumer anticipations and models of durable goods demand*. In Mincer, J. (1969). *Economic Forecasts and Expectations*. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Kahneman, A. & Tversky, A. (1979, March). Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk. *Econometrica*, 47, 263-291.
- Kamin, J & Erickson D.A. (1981, April 8-12). *Parent Choice of Schooling in British Columbia: Preliminary Findings*. Annual meeting of the American Educational

Research Association. Los Angeles.

- Lichtenstein, D.R; Ridgway, N.M; Netemeyer, R.G. (1993, May). Price Perceptions and Consumer Shopping Behavior: A Field Study. *Journal-of-Marketing-Research*, 30(2), 234-245.
- Lieberman, M. (1990). *Public School Choice: Current Issues/Future Prospects*. Technomic Publishing Co. Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
- Long, J.E; and Toma, E.F. (1988, May). The Determinants of Private School Attendance, 1970-1980) *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 70(2), 351-357.
- Mangold, W.G. & Babakus, E.. (1990, Spring). Monitoring Service Quality. *Review of Business*, 11(4), 21-27.
- McCracken, G. (1988). The Long Interview. *Qualitative Research Methods Volume 13*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- McGaw, B., Piper, K., Banks, D. & Evans, B. (1993). *Improving Australia's Schools*. Australian Council for Educational Research. Hawthorn, Victoria.
- McGroarty D. (1994, Fall). School choice slandered. *Public Interest*, 117, 94-114.
- McKeown, P.J. & Hone, B.W. (Ed.) (1967). *The Independent School: Papers Presented To The Headmasters Conference*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Meissner, D.G., Browne, J.C. & Van Dunk, E. (1997, November). *School Choice in Cleveland and Milwaukee, What Parents Look For*. The Public Policy Forum Report, Milwaukee.
- Murray, M.N. (1993, Spring). Reform and choice in education: Fulfilling our expectations. *Survey of Business*, 28(4), 2-3.
- Murray, M.N & Wallace, S. (1997, September). The implications of expanded school choice. *Pubic Finance Review*, 25(5), 459-473.
- Naumann, E. (1994, September). Deliver Value. *Executive Excellence*, 5.
- Oliver, R.L. (1996). Varieties of Value in the Consumption Satisfaction Response *Advances in Consumer Research*, 23, 143-147.
- Organisation For Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. (1995). *School: A Matter of Choice*. Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. Paris, France.
- Palmer, A. (1994). *Principles of Services Marketing*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Europe.
- Payne, A. (1995). *Advances in Relationship Marketing*. London. Kogan.

- Payne, A. Christopher, M., Peck, H. & Clark, M. (1998, June). Relationship Marketing for Competitive Advantage: Winning and Keeping Customers. London. Butterworth-Heinemann
- QSR NUD.IST. (1995) Qualitative Data Analysis Software for Research Professionals, Revision 3, Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty. Ltd., Victoria, Australia.
- Segal, T. (1992). Look Who's Ahead of the Learning Curve. *Business Week*. Special Issue, 92-98.
- Sheth, J.N., Newman, B.L., & Gross, B.L. (1991). *Consumption Value and Market Choices: Theory and Applications*. College Division, South-Western Publishing Co.
- SPSS (1999). SPSS for Windows Version 9. SPSS Inc. Chicago Illinois.
- Solomon, M.R. (1996). *Consumer Behaviour, Buying, Having and Being*. Third Edition. Prentice Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Steenkamp, J.B. (1990, December). Conceptual Model of the Quality Perception Process. *Journal-of-Business-Research*, 21(4), 309-333.
- Stewart, D.W. (1981, February). The Application and Misapplication of Factor Analysis in Marketing Research. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 51-62.
- Sweeney, J., Soutar, G., Whiteley, A. & Johnson, L. (1996). *Generating Consumption Value Items: A Parallel Interviewing Process Approach*. Working Paper. University of Western Australia.
- Sweeney, J.C, Soutar, G.N, & Johnson, L.W. (1997, December). *Consumer perceived value: First stages in the development of a multiple item scale*. A paper presented at The Australian and New Zealand Marketing Educator's Conference, Melbourne. Australia.
- Sweeney, J.C, Soutar, G.N, & Johnson, L.W. (1999). The role of perceived risk in the quality-value relationship: A study in a retail environment. *Journal of Retailing*, 75(1), 77-105
- Woodruff, R.B. & Gardial, S.F. (1996). *Know your customer: new approaches to understanding customer value and satisfaction*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Whyte, W. F. (1960). Interviewing in Field Research, in Burgess, R.G. (1984) In the field: An Introduction to field research. Allen & Unwin, London. 111-122
- Young, G.W. (1986). *Parental Attitudes to an Independent School*. Unpublished masters thesis, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.
- Zeithaml, V.A. (1988, July). Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, 2-22.
- Zikmund W.G. (1994). *Business Research Methods* 4th Edition. Orlando: Dryden Press.

APPENDIX 1 - The Questionnaire

This is a study about secondary school choice. We are interested in finding out the extent to which parents are involved with and what they value when choosing a secondary school for their children.

The results of this study are for academic purposes, although they will help the College better understand your views, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Some of the statements are similar. This is necessary to properly measure your opinions, and for no other purpose. There are no trick questions.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Answer the questions in relation to the child who is currently in Year 6 and is registered to enrol in the college.
2. Check only one answer per statement
3. When you have finished check to be sure you have not omitted any answers

Thank you very much!

1. Please tell us your post code? _____
2. How many children are in your family? _____
3. What number child is your year 6 student, where 1 is eldest, 2 is second born and so on. _____

Please circle the number which corresponds to your answer.

- | | | |
|--|----|----------------------------|
| 4. Are any of your children currently attending secondary school? | 1 | Yes |
| | 2 | No |
| 5. If yes, is this child/children attending The College? | 1 | Yes |
| | 2 | No |
| 6. If no, what secondary school are they attending? | 1 | All Saints College |
| | 2 | Applecross High School |
| | 3 | Aquinas College |
| | 4 | Christian Bros - Fremantle |
| | 5 | Como High School |
| | 6 | Corpus Christie College |
| | 7 | John Curtin Senior High |
| | 8 | Lakeland High School |
| | 9 | Leeming High School |
| | 10 | Melville High School |
| | 11 | Penhros College |
| | 12 | Perth Waldorf School |
| | 13 | Rossmoyne High School |
| | 14 | Santa Maria College |
| | 15 | Seton College |
| | 16 | Wesley College |
| | 17 | Willetton High School |
| | 18 | Other - Please Name _____ |
| 7. Did you attend a private school? | 1 | Yes |
| | 2 | No |
| 8. Did your partner attend a private school? | 1 | Yes |
| | 2 | No |
| 9. If yes, did this influence your decision to send your child to a private school? | 1 | Yes |
| | 2 | No |
| 10. How difficult do you believe it will be for your child to travel between the college and home? | 1 | Very Difficult |
| | 2 | Quite Difficult |
| | 3 | No problems |

Please circle the number which corresponds to your answer.

11. How would you best describe the occupations of you and your partner?

YOU		PARTNER	
1	Crafts/Tradesperson	2	Crafts/Tradesperson
3	Office/Clerical	4	Office/Clerical
5	Manual/Factory Worker	6	Manual/Factory Worker
7	Retired	8	Retired
9	Shop Worker	10	Shop Worker
11	Professional/Sen. Manager	12	Professional/Sen. Manager
13	Domestic Duties	14	Domestic Duties
15	Farmer	16	Farmer
17	Education/Medical Services	18	Education/Medical Services
19	Student	20	Student
21	Services (army/police etc)	22	Services (army/police etc)
23	Self Employed	24	Self Employed

12. If the combined family income is between \$700 & \$999 per week (\$36,400 & \$51,948 per annum) would you describe your family's income as being:

- 1 Above Average
2 About average
3 Below Average

13. Is your Year 6 student registered to enrol at any other private schools?

- 1 Yes
2 No

14. If Yes, at what school/s is he/she registered to enrol?

- 15.
- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 1 | All Saints College | 7 | Santa Maria College |
| 2 | Aquinas College | 8 | Seton College |
| 3 | Christian Bros - Fremantle | 9 | Wesley College |
| 4 | Corpus Christie College | 10 | Other - Please Name _____ |
| 5 | Penhros College | | |
| 6 | Perth Waldorf School | | |

Q16. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling one of the seven numbers next to each statement. If you "strongly disagree" circle 1. If you "strongly agree" circle 7. If your feelings are not so strong, circle one of the numbers in the middle. There are no right or wrong answers. Please tell us honestly how you feel.

	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
a. There is a lack of discipline in most high schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
b. Teachers are carefully selected at private colleges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
c. Religious education is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
d. Discipline aids a child's learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
e. A school's image is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
f. Children get "lost in the system" in large schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
g. Government schools do not have a nurturing environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
h. Parents are more involved in a child's education at a private school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
i) We feel forced to send our child to a private school because of their advantages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
j) A school's reputation is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
k) The government system provides a good all round education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
l) A school's location is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
m) Our background has influenced our decision to consider the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
n) Paying fees involves parents in the school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Q 16 cont.

	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree						
a) Children receive a better education at a private school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
p) I am familiar with the secondary education system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
q) A school's academic success is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
r) Private schools offer more opportunity for academic success	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
s) Government Schools do not offer as much opportunity for personal development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
t) A school's religious affiliation plays a big part in a child's education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
u) Our friends will approve if we send our child to the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
v) We feel relaxed about sending our child to the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
w) The college has consistent quality in its programmes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
x) The college is a good school for the price	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
y) Private schools have "snob" value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
z) The college will improve the way we are perceived by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
aa) The college will be around a long time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
bb) The college will provide a consistent education for our child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
cc) The college fits in with our friends' ideas about a good school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
dd) I feel reluctant about paying school fees	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ee) Parents should be involved in their children's education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ff) Extra-curricular activities are important to a child's education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
gg) Private schools offer more job opportunities when education is completed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
hh) We feel good about sending our child to the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ii) The college will perform well for our child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
jj) The college is likely to give a good return for our money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
kk) The college is a well run school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ll) We will enjoy being associated with the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
mm) The college is a reasonably priced school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
nn) Paying fees for five years will be a problem for us	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
oo) Only wealthy people send their children to private schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
pp) A private school education is a waste of money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
qq) We really want our child to go to the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
rr) The college offers real value for money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ss) The college will allow our child to do a range of things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
tt) High achieving parents send their children to private colleges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
uu) Attending a private school enhances a child's future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
vv) Professional people send their children to private schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ww) The college appeals to our friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
xx) The college is a versatile institution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
yy) It will give us pleasure to have a child at the college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
zz) The college is appealing and attractive to most people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
aaa) The college will help us to feel acceptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
bbb) We would feel guilty if we couldn't offer our child the best education available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ccc) Children influence their parents' choice of secondary school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ddd) If we came into a large amount of money this would influence our choice of school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
eee) If our income was substantially reduced we would change our choice of school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
fff) If we shifted to another area this would change our choice of school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
ggg) If our child didn't like the school they were attending, we would change schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
hhh) We would consider changing schools if our child was not achieving expectations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							

17. Taking everything into account, what is the likelihood that you will continue with the enrolment process for your child to attend the college in the year 2000?

Please circle the number which corresponds to your answer.

Certain	1
Almost sure (90% likely)	2
Very probable (80% likely)	3
Probable (70% likely)	4
Good possibility (60% likely)	5
Fairly good possibility (50% likely)	6
Fair possibility (40% likely)	7
Some possibility (30% likely)	8
Slight possibility (20% likely)	9
Very slight possibility (10% likely)	10
No chance or almost no chance (1% likely)	11

18. How important are each of the following people/groups in your choice of the college? Please indicate the level of importance you attach to each of the following areas by **circling** one of the seven numbers next to each statement. If you believe it is "Of no importance" circle 1. If you believe it is "very important" circle 7. If your feelings are not so strong, circle one of the numbers in the middle. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Of no importance						Very important
i. Media Reports [eg newspapers, radio]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ii. Extended Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
iii. Your Child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
iv. Friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v. Neighbours	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
vi. Parents of the college students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
vii. Advertising/Promotional Material	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
viii. The School Principal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ix. Teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. What is the most you would consider spending on your child's education each year. Include all expenses such as school fees, uniforms, books, extra curricular activities, transport

Please circle the number which corresponds to your answer.

1	Less than \$1,000
2	\$1,000 to \$3000
3	\$3001 to \$6000
4	\$6001 to \$9000
5	More than \$9000

End of Survey

If at all possible please return this survey by 27th February 1998

Thank you very much for your time it is very much appreciated.